Thriving Congregations

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES
FOR THRIVING CONGREGATIONS

HOLY TENACITY

Holy Tenacity sustains Thriving Congregations. In the face of challenge or decline, they persist, not through sheer willpower, but through a deep, growing faith that anchors them in God's ongoing work.

HOLY TENACITY

Living Through the Seasons of Faith

Persevering with steadfast faith in the face of challenges, staying true to your core mission and values.

FRAMEWORK

Thriving congregations are formed across seasons of life. Faithfulness is not about strength in every season, but about learning how to trust God's presence in each one.

Holy tenacity reflects a theological vision shaped by this trust in God's sustaining presence over time. It invites congregations to recognize where they are, remember where they have been and discern how God continues to sustain them. Rather than striving for constant momentum, this practice centers steady, grace-filled faithfulness across changing conditions.

SEASONS OF FAITH

Faithfulness is formed across each of the seasons of our life together. This means learning to see God in times of growth, pruning, waiting and harvest. These are the four seasons that will guide this practice that inspires perseverance.

What does faithfulness look like for our congregation in this season? What has that looked like in other seasons? What are we trusting God to grow even if we cannot see it yet?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Practice: Living through the Seasons of Faith

Materials: Four large posters, additional posters for 'Collective Stories' and 'Sources of Sustenance,' markers, paper and pens

Instructions: *Label four corners or areas of the room with signs marking four seasons: Growth, Pruning, Waiting, Harvest. Use additional posters to create a 'Collective Stories' timeline and a 'Sources of Sustenance' poster. Provide paper and pens for individuals to use.*

1. **Name the Season** – Ask, 'Which season best describes our congregation right now?' Then invite participants to move to the space that reflects their understanding of which season fits the congregation at this time. Then ask: What feels true about this season? What is difficult? What feels alive?

2. **Remembering our collective stories** – Now let's look back on our history and ask: "Where have we seen God's faithfulness?" Invite participants to move to the season where they remember experiencing God's presence in the life of the congregation. Discuss: What experience do you remember? Why does it reflect this season?

   Now, have everyone come back together and share a few examples of when the congregation endured hardship and a few moments when new life emerged. When did we feel God sustaining us? Take some time for the large group to share a few stories across the room and capture them on a visible timeline called "Collective Stories".

3. **Name What Sustains Life** – Take some time now to consider what nourishes our congregation in hard seasons. Have individuals ask: When things are hardest, what helps you stay rooted in faith? Then share responses on a poster ("Our Sources of Sustenance"). Do you hear about prayer practices, relationships, worship rhythms, quiet spaces, acts of service? If you have time, consider which ones are personal and which are communal.

4. **Prune with Confidence** – In the seasons of life, pruning is not failure; it is how living things grow. Consider what may need to be released. What are we holding onto that is no longer life-giving? What would it mean to let it go? What fears surface in releasing it? If it helps, you can have each person write something anonymously.

5. **Nurturing Growth in this Season** – What faithful practices might sustain us in this current season? Ask the group to highlight some shared practices for the coming season (e.g. intentional storytelling (testimonies), shared meals, a collective contemplative or sabbath practice). Clarify next steps: Who will carry this? When will this take place?

KEY INSIGHTS

This practice invites congregations to shift from anxiety about change toward faithful presence within it. How is tenacity less about strategy and more about the presence of God's Spirit? How is it less about our efforts and more about grace-filled practices? How is it less about fixing and more about sustaining our core mission? The hope is that the stories shared in this practice will help you recognize tenacity that has sustained your congregation.

This metaphor helps congregations interpret their current reality with honesty and hope. It fosters faithfulness in what cannot yet be seen. Like planting a seed, trust often precedes visible growth.